

Please amend claim 6 as follows:

Sub B4
cancel
~~*A3*~~
cancel
A6. (Amended) Process according to claim 3, characterized in that the step (ix), is carried out by a slow addition of a sodium hydroxide solution until a pH of about 7.5 is reached. A

Please amend claim 7 as follows:

A7. (Amended) Process according to claim 3, characterized in that at the step (ix) the blend is cooled in an ice bath and the pH is continuously followed so that the pH does not exceed 10. A

✓
Please amend claim 9 as follows:

A9. (Amended) Process according to claim 1, characterized in that the chosen acetic anhydride quantity is 3.2 mols/mol of anhydroglucose. A

[Please amend claim 10 as follows:]

A10. (Amended) Process according to claim 1, characterized in that the chosen esterification time ranges from 20 to 30 mn.--

[Please amend claim 11 as follows:]

A11. (Amended) Process according to claim 1, characterized in that the chosen esterification temperature is 40°C. A

[Please amend claim 12 as follows:]

A12. (Amended) Process according to claim 1, characterized in that the starting cellulose material is selected in the group comprising cellulose residues purified from co-products derived from agriculture and, more particularly, from cereal bran, for example wheat and corn, but also from wood cellulose, for example, pine-tree, or microcrystalline cellulose. A

✓
Please amend claim 14 as follows:

A4
A14. (Amended) Derivative blend according to claim 13, characterized in that said derivatives have a sulphation degree ranging from 0.2 to 0.6. A

~~16. (Amended) Derivative blend according to claim 13, characterized in that only the carbon atom which is in position 6 of the hydroglucose cycles of said derivatives is sulphated.~~ *AV*

~~17~~ 17. (Amended) Derivative blend according to claim 13,
in that said derivatives have a viscosimetric mean
inherent viscosity determined in cupric ethylene diamine at
25°C ranging from 210 to 1590. ~~17~~

~~A~~18. (Amended) Derivative blend according to claim 15, characterized in that said blend intrinsic viscosity, determined by dilution at nil concentration of the reduced viscosity in water at 25°C ranges from 600 to 1500ml/g. ~~u~~

19. (Amended) Blend according to claim 13, characterized in that said derivatives have such water retention properties that in the presence of salts, they swell up to 200 ml/g while remaining insoluble.

--20. (Amended) Blend according to claim 13, characterized in that it is free from triacetylated derivatives.--

[Please amend claim 21 as follows:]

--21. (Amended) Blend according to claim 13, characterized in that said derivatives are thermally stable for 16 hours at 80°C.--

[Please amend claim 22 as follows:]

--22. (Amended) Blend according to claim 13, characterized in that it has the form of a thermoreversible and partially thixotropic gel.--

REMARKS

Claims 5-7, 9-12, 14, and 16-22 have been amended to eliminate multiple dependencies.

The amendment to the specification, and the substitution of claims 1-22 merely place this national phase application in the same condition as it was during Chapter II of the International Phase.

Entry of the above amendments is earnestly solicited. An early and favorable first action on the merits is earnestly requested.